(b) whether the funds sanctioned for the upgradation of checking and testing facilities at various scientific institutes was not adequate to meet the current requirement of the Ministry; and

(c) if so, what are the facts of the case and the action taken to protect the health of our citizens from this problem ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT) : (a) to (c) The Department of Biotechnology along with Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established a National Containment cum-Quarantine Facility for testing transgenic planting material to be imported for research purposes. Research and development has also been taken up for development of analytical techniques for rapid detection of transgenic traits in GM foods and products derived therefrom in several institutions namely :

Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore; National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad; Industrial Toxicological Research Centre, Lucknow, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad and National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resource, New Delhi, and strengthening the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad for the establishment of national facility for evaluation of safety of GM foods. Adequate funding has been provided for this. Strengthening and upgradation wherever further needed will also be done at the port and in scientific institutions. The Government is not aware of clandestine import of genetically modified (GM) food or crops in the country. The import of genetically modified food or crops is done with the approval of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, whose approval is mandatory before import of GM Food or crop. The GEAC has been set up under Rule 4 of the Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Genetically Engineered Organisms or cells, 1989 notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Port Authorities have been notified on this requirement. Wherever any such cases are detected or there is a doubt, the matter is to be referred to the GEAC, which evaluates the food and health safety aspects prior to its import.

Assistance to Institute of Advanced Study in Science & Technology, Guwahati

4483. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government received a proposal during 2001 for fully funding the Institute of Advanced Study in Science & Technology, Guwahati; and

(b) if so, the status thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCEINCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The Government have taken steps to strengthen the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati by providing a major grant of Rs. 955 lakhs to upgrade their infrastructure including a building. The proposal for full funding by the Government of India is being reviewed in light of the infrastructural developments taking place at IASST.

Lowering the production cost of Steel

†4484. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI :
SHRI LAJPAT RAI :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the cost of production of steel in India is higher as compared to that of in other steel producing countries;

(b) if so, the countries where the cost of production of steel is lower than the cost of production of steel in India;

(c) whether there are possibilities of lowering the cost of production of steel in India; and

(d) if so, the steps to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Some of the major countries where the cost of production of finished steel (flat steel) is lower than the cost of production of steel in India are Brazil, China, the CIS countries, South Korea, Australia and U.K.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The following measures may lead to lowering the cost of production of steel in India :

Technological upgradation of steel plants.

Reducing cost of processing and improving productivity through intensive R&D efforts.

Optimal use of raw materials including labour.

Reducing energy consumption at all levels and thereby improving efficiency in overall operations.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.